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THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION.

A Sermon preached by Rev. WILLIAM HOOPER, D. D., L. L. D., at Hertford, Perquimons Co., N. C., Dec. 2, 1855, at the Ordination of Mr. Thomas H. Pritchard, who was then constituted pastor of that church.

"God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Cor. v : 18-20.

The first thing that strikes our attention in this passage are the words "reconciled" and "reconciliation." This implies a quarrel, a variance; for there can be no need of reconciliation where there is no quarrel. The very use of the term *reconciliation*, then, draws attention to the wonderful and alarming *fact*, that there is an enmity between two parties which is to be made up—which is to be healed. Who are the parties to this quarrel? Evidently God and man, for the text speaks of God reconciling the world unto himself. A quarrel between God and man! How unequal the antagonists! A worm matched against the Almighty!—a creature against his Creator! What fearful odds! Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like his? (Job 40: 9.) But why should the quarrel go on between adversaries so disproportioned in strength, and where all the *right* is on the stronger side and all the *wrong* on the weaker side? Why should not the stronger party terminate the quarrel by crushing his adversaries at once, or, at least, by putting them into a place of punishment where they could no longer fight against him, or where their fighting would be impotent against him and recoil with increased woe

upon themselves? It is because the stronger party is as merciful as he is just. It is because his enemies are his children, and he would rather they should be turned into *friends* than into *victims*. And he has therefore made known to the weaker party his willingness, nay more, his *desire*, his *anxiety* for a healing of the breach, for a reconciliation of the controversy between them. He has not only made known his desire for a reconciliation, but he has shown the way to effect it—devised and published the *plan* that seemed suitable for himself and for the offending party. Now we may be sure that this plan would be one worthy of God—one which would display most clearly the glory of his attributes, and have the best effect upon man; not only destroy his enmity and win back his affections, but give him the most exalted conceptions of the character of God. The plan must be one which will most carefully guard against the inference, that God pardons his offending creature because his sin is a matter of little consequence. If it produces this effect—if it allows of this conclusion, it will do the sinner an everlasting moral injury. It will make him think lightly of the sinfulness of sin, and of course less penitent for having committed it. It will make him have hard thoughts of God for having annexed to it so heavy a penalty, and less thankful for the forgiveness of it. It will give him lower ideas of God as having less abhorrence of sin and less indignation against it, than a holy and all-perfect God ought to have. We may be sure that a scheme of reconciliation planned by God would be free from these defects—would jealously guard against these pernicious tendencies.

What, then, was the scheme devised and promulgated for the mutual reconciliation of God and man? It was this: There was a man named JESUS, who appeared at Jerusalem, some 1800 years ago. He performed astonishing miracles. All the laws of nature appeared to be at his command. He could make the most obstinate and desperate diseases disappear with one word. Nay, he even raised dead men, repeatedly, to life. He created food in the wilderness for the hungry thousands that followed him. He walked on the surface of the sea, without sinking. In the midst of a violent storm at sea, he, like a sovereign of nature, rebuked the winds and waves and in a moment all became hushed—as still as a little lake, in a summer morning. These and many other astonishing evidences

es of sovereignty over nature, compelled the belief in all but the most prejudiced minds that God was *with* this man. The testimony of Nicodemus was the voice of human nature : "Rabbi, no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." But this is not all. God might be *with* any prophet. He was with Moses, when he stretched out his rod over the Red Sea and its waters parted asunder and made a pathway for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over. He was with Elijah when by his prayer the heavens were shut up and gave no rain for three years and a-half; and at another prayer, fire came down from the same heaven and burned up a hundred of his enemies. These were proofs that God was with these men as well as he was with Jesus. But our text asserts more than this. "God was in Christ." This was something far more and very different from the other. Jesus Christ, was the Word of God and the apostle John tells us that "the Word was God," and that this same "Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." In entire unison with this Paul says "Christ was over all, God blessed forever," that he was "God manifested in the flesh," that "in him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily [that is incarnate] and that we are to look for the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Thomas overwhelmed with the manifestation of present deity, calls him "my Lord and my God" and stands unaccused of blasphemy. And he himself warrants the adoration of his disciples, saying: "Whosoever hath seen me hath seen the Father." "I and the Father are one." All these scriptures confirm and explain the doctrine of the text: "God was in Christ." But what was the object of this wonderful incarnation, this mysterious union of God and man? Did the deity walk on earth in the person of Christ merely to bless men with the cure of diseases and the miraculous supply of food, to teach them their duty more clearly, and to reveal the awful truths of a judgment to come and eternal rewards and punishments? Doubtless these *were* purposes of the Saviour's advent. But if they had been all, others besides the Christ might have fulfilled the mission; others could have healed the sick; others might have fed the hungry; others might have taught the truths of man's duty and destiny. But our text tells of an office performed by this incarnation which none but a divine Being could accom-

plish. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The incarnation, then, was to achieve a *reconciliation*, and this reconciliation was to be effected by not imputing guilt to the guilty. And how was this non-imputation to be done? Not by a mere causeless, arbitrary, and ungrounded act of clemency, relinquishing the demands of justice, and saying to the law which claimed the sinner's death, "Thou art too rigid. I have been cruel in enacting thee, and thy penalty is so severe, that I will blot out thy accusations; I will snatch thy prey out of thy hands." Was this the manner in which the non-imputation of trespasses was to lead to the reconciliation between God and man? No; for then man might have said: "God found out that he was in the wrong; that his severity was pushed to an extreme, and therefore he remitted the penalty, and set the prisoner free, as deserving an acquittal. This mode of reconciliation would have dishonored God, and given the offending party a triumph. The non-imputation of guilt, then, was effected not by a nullification of the guilt—a passing it over as a thing of little consequence, but by a transfer of it. The trespasses of the world were by this wonderful plan of God not to be imputed to *them* because they were imputed to Christ. This view the whole body of scriptures sustain, and render luminous as the day. Christ has become man's deliverer by no cheaper process than by becoming his substitute, his alternate—presenting to the affrighted universe the awful spectacle of the consequences of sin, and what a price heaven was willing to pay, rather than see the race of man sink under the wrath of God. In this view, Isaiah, more than 700 years beforehand, tells of the purpose of the Messiah's coming: "He was wounded for *our* transgressions—he was bruised for our iniquities, and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all. He was led as a sheep to the slaughter." And when he *did* come into the world, he gave himself the same character; he announced the same purpose of his descent from heaven upon the earth: "The Son of man," said he, "came to give his life a ransom for many." "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." His apostles are full, to overflowing, of the same topic. This is the pregnant theme of all their writings and teachings: "We judge," says

Paul, "that one died for all." "He gave himself a ransom for all." "Our Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity;" that is, pay a ransom for us, that we might not have any iniquity charged against us by God. And what says the great apostle of the circumcision? "He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree."*

You cannot but be struck, my hearers, with the frequent repetition of such phraseology in the scriptures, both old and new, indicating that the minds of the several writers were full of this idea, and that the Holy Spirit, by inspiring them to use this language, thus "takes of the things of Christ, to shew them unto us." All these expressions, taken from various sacred penmen, indicate *substitution*—the taking upon himself the penalty due to us. The very name given him, of "God's Lamb, that taketh away the sin of the world," connects him with all the propitiatory offerings of the Old Testament, and shows that this Lamb's blood was prefigured by all the innumerable lambs that were slain on the Jewish altars, and had superseded them all, by fulfilling the whole intention and scope of the sacrificial system. And while the language abundantly proves that Christ's work was voluntary, that no man took his life from him against his will, but he "laid it down of himself;" yet at the same time his coming had its origin in the love of our offended Father. It was born in the heart of God, who so loved the world that "he gave his only begotten son," &c. It required of him a costly sacrifice of affection, if I may so speak, and he intended we should know it. When he gives him up for us, he calls him "his *own* son," "his well-beloved son," "his only begotten son." These expressions of endearment and of valuation were purposely employed to give man a pathetic and touching conception of what the Father gave up rather than have man for his eternal enemy and victim. "He

* And how speaks the beloved disciple, he whose head lay on the bosom of Jesus, and felt the throbbings of his heart? "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God with thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation."

spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all ;” as much as to say he would not withhold from us the *best thing he had*, and in delivering up his own Son for us, he has given us assurance that all other things are ours—that having given us the *greater*, he will not deny the *less*. Thus the pardoned rebel must trace all his happiness to the bosom of the Father. He is not tempted to say the compassion of the Son snatched me out of the reluctant grasp of the Father. No ; for it was the Father’s compassion that first originated the thought of redemption, and was willing his best beloved son should drain his richest veins in our behalf. The ransomed soul loves equally the Father for giving the *Son*, and the Son for giving *himself*.

This, then, is the amazing, the mysterious, the overwhelming fact announced in our text : that “ God was in Christ,” and that this was the purpose of it, to “ reconcile the world unto himself by not imputing their trespasses unto them.” God brings about the reconciliation by assuming human nature, and thus furnishing a victim fit and able to bear the crimes and woes of a world of sinners. The substitution was so entire and complete as to warrant the apostle in saying that God his father *made him to be sin* for us ;” and Luther, following in the track of Paul, ventured upon the startling declaration that Christ was the greatest criminal that the sun ever shone upon. The papal party was glad to seize upon the imprudent expression as a handle against him, but the great Reformer’s soul so thoroughly understood, and so fully embraced the doctrine of substitution, that he as it were saw the Redeemer laden with the accumulated guilt of all the murderers, blasphemers, thieves, drunkards, unclean persons, revilers, and extortioners who should ever to the end of the world be saved by his death, and therefore he wondered not at the unexampled agonies of the cross, and that “ he who saved others could not, without defeating the object of his mission, save himself.” No wonder the angels, with holy curiosity, desire to look into this mysterious transaction, for they never saw any thing like it in heaven. The effect of this doctrine of the cross upon the minds that realize and embrace it is, to take away the enmity towards God—to break down the middle wall of partition between heaven and earth, and make the sun of mercy shine forth from behind the dark cloud of wrath that was hanging over us.

The plan of reconciliation being now all executed, the achiever of that plan cries out, with his expiring breath : "It is finished." The plan of redemption is consummated—all things are now ready ; come ye to the marriage. The preparation being made by this marvellous event of Christ's death, there must be a way of its coming into contact with the minds of men. This is called "the ministry of reconciliation," *i.e.*, the administration, the management, the handling of the negotiation between the parties at variance. Now, we all know what the *administration of medicine* is. The medicine is the substance endued by God with virtues suited to the sick man's cure ; the administrator is the physician who brings it to his lips, and persuades him to take it. The doctrine of our text, "God in Christ," is the medicine for the troubled and guilty soul of man, and the minister is the administrator of that medicine. How carefully is the physician trained, how jealously is he fortified with diplomas, certifying the public of his competency and trust-worthiness, before the bodies of his fellow men are confided to his hands. And after all his assiduous and careful preparation, how anxiously, and even tremulously, does the conscientious physician undertake critical cases, where valuable lives are at stake. With how much more anxiety and concern ought the minister of reconciliation to deal with the lives of souls, when he considers that a want of skill or faithfulness on his part may lead to their endless ruin ! "If thou warnest not the wicked to turn from his wicked way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hands." These words may well make every minister's ears tingle. And with what holy caution ought ordaining hands to be laid on that head that is to go forth and guide souls to heaven or to hell. For this reason we are solemnly warned : "Lay hands suddenly on no man ;" "Be not partakers of other men's sins ;" showing that ordaining ministers are responsible for the mischiefs of precipitate and rash ordination. But there can hardly be precipitate or rash ordination where he "who desireth the office of a bishop" has believed and felt the force of the grand fact stated in the text, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," and repeated by the same apostle in another place almost in the same words : "God was manifested in the flesh." He, into whose soul has entered the full meaning and belief of

this overwhelming declaration, of the incarnation of the Deity, for the purpose of paying man's debts, bearing man's sorrows, and expiating man's guilt, and earning a heaven for him,—I say, the man into whose soul has entered the full meaning and belief of this overwhelming truth, is furnished with a weight of obligation, and a power of holy impulse, that will make the preaching of the cross as natural and necessary to his life and peace, as quickened respiration is necessary to the runner in the race, or the athlete in the palaestra. It will be a fire locked up in his bones, which will tell to all around that zeal for God's house is eating him up. This was the fire that glowed in the very marrow of Whitefield's bones, and which made him the greatest of preachers, drawing 20,000 people within the magic circle of his enchantments, and melting them down, one and all, Greek and barbarian, learned and unlearned, aged and young, philosopher and peasant, male and female, in the furnace of his consuming eloquence. It is true, much of Whitefield's marvellous power was due to the constitutional aid and exquisite sensibility of his soul. But this was only the *tinder* in the vessel of clay. The doctrine of the God-head dying on the cross for sinners, was the lightning from heaven that kindled that tinder into a flame to enlighten and warm the world.

Let us now examine what provision God has made for having this healing medicine conveyed or administered to the diseased souls of men ; or, to adhere more strictly to the language of the text, how the message of reconciliation is to be delivered to the party at war with him. The apostle tells us the process : He hath (1.) reconciled *us* (the preachers) to himself by Jesus Christ ; and then (2.) hath given to us the ministry or administration of reconciliation. Here, then, is the order established by God. The ministers are first reconciled to God before they are sent to reconcile others ; that is, by understanding and embracing the great doctrine of God in Christ they are brought into a state of forgiveness and favor with God ; he imputes no more their trespasses unto them. *He* is reconciled to *them*, and the love that is thereby begotten in their hearts destroys their hostility and guilty fear, and *they* are reconciled to *him*. Thus there is a mutual reconciliation ; and this personal experience and hope of God's mercy is the necessary prelude, and the divine

education for the ministry. The physician of souls must first take the medicine himself and be healed by it, before he is qualified to administer it to others.

Let us examine now into the business which a minister has to do, and we shall see the wisdom and the necessity of this preparatory work. The apostle, after speaking of himself and fellow apostles as being first reconciled to God, and then having had committed to them the ministry of reconciliation, says : " Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ "—ambassadors to negotiate a treaty of peace between God and man—ambassadors armed with a message of terror and of love, or, as the Christian poet beautifully expresses it: " By them the violated law speaks out its thunders, and by them, in strains as sweet as angels use, the gospel whispers peace." They are like the eagle in our national escutcheon : grasping in its right foot the olive branch, and in its left the arrows of lightning. God, then, calls the preachers of the gospel his ambassadors, and by contemplating the character and qualifications of an ambassador, we shall form the best idea of the work of a minister, and why pardoned and reconciled sinners alone are suitable instruments for carrying on the treaty of reconciliation between God and man.

1. In the first place, the ambassador must be fully convinced that God is in the right, and his creatures in the wrong—that he is justly angry with them, and that his threatenings against them are deserved. This lesson God teaches him in his conversion. He has *seen his own* guilt, and has taken part with God against himself. He has said :

" My soul lies humbled in the dust,
And owns thy dreadful sentence just."

Of course he is prepared to be properly zealous for God, and to urge his claims with sincerity and ardor ; " He is very zealous for the Lord of Hosts." The honor of God lies near his heart. Hence he will preach with *authority*. His holy cause makes him bold. He will not allow his hearers to think lightly of their sins by soft and feeble representations of their demerits. His own soul being deeply awed by the majesty and holiness of that God who required the crucifixion of his own Son as a necessary tribute to his violated law, he will be well qualified to set forth that majesty and awful holiness to his hearers. The honor of God's throne, and the claims of his justice, will be in safe keeping in *his* negotia-

tions with the other party in the quarrel. Again : An ambassador from a king to his revolted subjects will be most persuasive and most successful, if he has felt the power and something of the wrath of his offended sovereign. If a certain province of a kingdom had rebelled against their prince, and that prince wished to try to bring them back to their allegiance before crushing them in battle, the best ambassador he could possibly employ would be one who had been taken prisoner in some previous battle—thrown into prison, and awaited with fear and trembling the day of execution, and when that day came had been taken out of his cell, pardoned, received into his sovereign's family, treated as a son, and then taken round to view all his sovereign's magazines of war, and his tremendous artillery—his myriads of infantry and cavalry, all drawn up for battle, and waiting the dreadful signal to engage. How feelingly could he plead with the feeble rebels, and paint to them the hopelessness and madness of the contest, and the certainty of utter destruction if they did not submit. So *he* is the best ambassador for God who has known and felt something of the terrors of the Lord. Those are always the most pungent and efficient preachers, who have felt in their own experience that "the pains of hell gat hold upon them," and have had sharp and alarming apprehensions of the wrath to come. So Paul tells us of himself, that having known the terrors of the Lord, he *persuaded* men. Ah ! who can tell the agonizing convictions and amazing terrors which agitated and rent the bosom of that daring blasphemer and fighter against God, during those three days of portentous darkness which he spent in Damascus, after he had been smitten down by the resplendent apparition of the lately crucified Nazarene ! He could neither eat nor drink for three days. Shut out from the light of the world, left to the solitude and gloom of his own soul, with nothing for that soul to work upon but his own cruel malice against Christ's people, and the audacious and desperate rage with which he had rushed upon the thick bossis of the Almighty's buckler, what could he have expected but every moment to be cast into hell. Then he was learning sad but salutary lessons for his future apostleship. Then God was giving him, in the inner chambers of his soul, visions of Sinai, all in a flame, and shaking him with the voice of the thunders and the sound of the trumpet. Those three days of

bodily darkness kindled an illuminating flame within, and were worth more to him than any three years of learned study at the feet of Gamaliel. But that night of storm and grief was rolling on the glorious morrow of his joy ; and more welcome than the dawn of a calm morning to the mariner after a night of storm and danger, was the salutation of Ananias to the stricken persecutor : " Brother Saul, the Lord (even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way, as thou camest), hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And now why tarriest thou ? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Something of this same experience will be of eminent service to every minister, that he may the better estimate and describe the danger of the sinner, as he stands up in battle against his God.

3. But the ambassador, in order to carry on a successful negotiation with man, and persuade him to be reconciled to his offended sovereign, must have something more than zeal for God's honor, and an acquaintance with his terrors. If he has only these, he will be apt to be a cold and stern and forbidding preacher. He may be " a son of thunder," but he will never be a Barnabas, " a son of consolation." He may awaken consciences, and benumb sinners with fears, so that their outward sins will stop ; and he may throw around them the spirit of bondage. But he will not *win* them. He will not encourage them to come and seek for pardon. He will not breathe hope into them, and persuade them to bow in willing obedience. In order to do this he must feel pity and sympathy for his hearers. He must remember his own wanderings and follies, his obstinacy and stupidity before his conversion. Feeling these deeply, he will make allowance for them and others. He will be furnished with all that stock of patience, long-suffering, and forbearance which is necessary to prevent him from throwing up his office with disgust, or retiring with indignation and despair when he meets with coldness, or levity, or opposition. These evidences of depravity, forced upon his attention, will only open more freely the sluices of his grief, and induce him to exclaim : " Poor sinner ! I was once just like thee." He will not pour out angry reproaches, but he will plead with pathos and melting entreaties. He will act the beseeching part which the apostle describes a little after our text. Now, then, we

are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did by us beseech, we pray in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God.

You observed that I left out the word *you*. Examine your Bibles ; you will find in both places it is supplied by the translators. I take the spirit of the passage to be this : As ambassadors for Christ, it is our office to pray *men*, not *you* particularly, to be reconciled to God. It is true the last clause, "Be ye reconciled," &c., is warranted by the original, but that is as if the sacred pleader had already put himself in the posture of a suppliant to all the world, addressing them in the second person, "Be ye," &c. This interpretation relieves the passage from the apparent inconsistency of the apostle's exhorting to be reconciled to God a church whom he addresses, in the opening of his letter, as "sanctified in Christ Jesus," and thanks God "for the grace of God which was given them." It clothes the passage, too, with new beauties, to my mind, as if the apostle would say : "We are ambassadors, but it is the *praying*, the *beseeching* ambassadors." This tender, sympathetic spirit, united with a faithful exhibition of the sinner's inexcusableness and constant danger, will make its way to the heart. This kind of preacher will be a man of tears. He will often be in company with Paul when he went about Ephesus for three years, warning men, night and day, with tears. The tear was often seen to fall on Whitefield's Bible as he preached. The mockers said they were a hypocrite's tears, but the sweet sisters, Truth and Charity, said they were kindred drops to those which fell from the Saviour's eyes over lost Jerusalem.

4. It is highly desirable to an ambassador that he should be able to tell of the goodness of his master, from personal experience—of the happiness he has found in the house that has adopted him. Men sigh for happiness. They do not find it in themselves—they do not find it in the shadows which they chase. They therefore look for it in their fellow creatures around them, and when amidst the general face of human nature, wrinkled with care, or counterfeiting happiness by folly's broad laugh, they discern the serene brow and calm smile of the humble Christian, telling of the sweet peace within—peace with God and his own conscience—they heave the involuntary sigh : "Oh, that I were like him." So felt the poor prodigal, when he remembered the happy circle he had foolishly forsaken. "How many hired ser-

vants of my father have food enough and to spare and I perish with hunger." This is the way to win souls. While therefore the Christian ambassador is often found, when occasion demands it, with tears in his eyes, his habitual spirit ought to be cheerful. True, he is a follower of "the man of sorrows," but then that man of sorrows bore our sorrows that we might not bear them ourselves, but bear *his joy* in place of our own native sorrow. Christ's minister must show to the world that religion is a *joyful* thing—that the favor of God and the hope of heaven throw a charm over life, and gild even the dark hours of adversity. Paul, bleeding under the scourge of the Roman magistrate, yet pouring forth glad psalmody, at midnight, in the jail, is advancing the gospel as much, perhaps more, than when thundering in the ears of Felix, the terrors of a judgment to come.

5. But a minister's work is not done when he has persuaded men to be reconciled to God. There must be not only *evangelists* to announce the glad tidings and make the first propositions of peace between God and man, there must be *pastors*, to take care of the sheep after they are gathered into the fold. So did the good Shepherd provide when he ascended up far above all heavens. "He constituted some apostles, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." What for? "For the perfecting of the saints." They were not to be left in their infantile state, but carried on to wards perfection till they "all grow up to the stature of the fullness of Christ." *This* is specially the pastor's work. He must lead and guide Christ's sheep. He must feed and strengthen them, and "have the rule over them." He must rebuke the erring; he must reclaim the backsliding; he must comfort the mourner; he must counsel and instruct the perplexed; he must extricate the poor sheep that is entangled among brambles or struggling in the mire; he must lift out the lamb that has fallen into the pit. And while he thus assists the feeble, he must control and guide the energies of the strong; he must impel the active and steer their course. He must be a wise pacifictor to heal the wounds of the church. He must be the firm opposer of what is wrong. He must be a sagacious and discriminating judge of truth and sound doctrine, so that he may be able to detect and expose error. To do this, he must study his Bible with great care, comparing scripture with scripture—"spiritual things with spiritual"—and be con-

stant in prayer for the Holy Spirit to guide him into all the truth," "to take of the things of Christ and show them unto him."

Here, my dear young brother, is the work and office to which a church of Jesus Christ has called you and which you have ventured—ventured, I hope with fear and trembling, to undertake. The undertaking is sufficiently appalling to *any one*. It made an apostle exclaim: "Who is sufficient for these things?" But I trust it is the Spirit of God that has moved you to "desire the office of a bishop," relying upon him for all your ability to discharge its duties. If so, you may sustain your sinking spirit with the same prop that held up the apostle: "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

You will see from the sketch which I have endeavored to draw of a pastor's work and official duties, that they require a well-furnished mind, great wisdom, prudence and discretion, deep piety and large acquaintance with the ways of God—a correct knowledge of the plan of salvation, and a personal heart-felt experience of its saving power and comforts. These qualifications, to be sure, cannot exist in a very young man, in full measure. But he ought to have the *beginning* of them all, and should grow rapidly in them; more so than common Christians, because he is in present want of them for the use of others as well as himself, and many sheep may be lost before he has acquired the full qualifications of a shepherd. As therefore the books which are to constitute a minister's helps, are so numerous, it is well for a young man to select a few standard authors and *study* them profoundly, and not to dissipate and distract his mind with a variety of writers of uncertain orthodoxy. And among those standard authors, I may be permitted specially to recommend the volumes of Andrew Fuller. You must have his works by your side, for your regular reading. The Bible must be your meat and bread, but let Andrew Fuller cook it for you. He has treated with masterly ability and great clearness, the most interesting and difficult subjects in the range of a minister's profession, and you will be thankful for such a guide. The disciple of Fuller will be sure that his opinions are not crude fancies or self-conceited theories, but have been adopted by the soberest and soundest expositors of the divine word in all ages. It is of the more importance to

a young minister to be select and self-denying in his reading in this age, when there is such a deluge of periodicals pouring from the press and rushing upon us, one in such quick succession after another, as to produce a sickening surfeit and entirely to exclude more solid reading. If a young minister does not determine to use resolute self-denial, this inundation will prove to his mind, not like the inundations of the Nile, the bringer of fertility, but will leave nothing but a deposit of sterile sand. There is an ambition now-a-days to know a little of everything. It is a far better ambition to understand well our own trade, however little we may know of other things. If a shoemaker should furnish his customers with worthless shoes, would it satisfy their disappointment to be told: "Never mind, though he is a bad shoemaker he can write very tolerable poetry." Should our family physician betray a want of skill and a child die under his treatment, would it be any consolation to the broken-hearted mother to be told that the doctor was a very well-read politician? or a useful president of a railroad? How much more insufferable and inexcusable would it be if a congregation of immortal souls should languish and starve, or be poisoned, because their pastor did not know how to lead them to heaven! The exigencies of the age and of the church do not allow of any waste of a minister's time. Learning, strictly professional, is wanting, and must be acquired by a young man with all rapidity, for the flood of infidelity and pestilent error, is rolling on, and the ministry must be ready to raise against it the mound of truth to prevent it from drowning the land.

There is one danger, my young brother, to which those of your age are very much exposed, and against which it is my duty to caution you before I conclude: it is the love of popular applause—the ambition to be talked of as a great pulpit speaker. This is the snare in which the great fowler entangles the feet of too many a preacher to the destruction of his own soul and those of his hearers. Oh how pitiable a sight it is, to see a man making use of the sacred desk to glorify *himself* instead of his Saviour! If there is any place where we ought to be humble it is there. If there is any place where self-seeking appears vile and contemptible, it is there, where the grandest interests that can fill the human mind or employ the human tongue ought to shame away the littleness of van-

ity, and make a conceited preacher appear an ugly dwarf. This is the character against which Paul warns Timothy, "A bishop must not be a *novice*, lest being lifted up with *pride* he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

I will conclude these counsels which have been already protracted, I fear, far beyond your patience, with one or two reflections.

1. All these necessary qualifications for the business of the ministry, show how impotent and insufficient are all other means for reconciling men to God, compared with the appointment of *living ambassadors*. It is God's chosen method and he has staked his wisdom and his character upon it. He has made this his main dependence, in the hands of the Spirit, for converting the world. "Go ye into all the world, &c." "Go teach all nations baptizing them." "I charge thee" is his awful injunction to young Timothy, "before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word: be instant, in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." And he who sees such a sacred legion to be wanting to fulfil this grand mission, will ever raise them up, though he may sometimes punish the churches who do not long for them and pray for them, and nurture them. I say he may curse such churches, with a dearth of them, and give them in their place spruce dandies, or frothy declaimers, or dry essay writers, or heartless men of the world. But if the church will nurture and send forth into the world such a sacred legion as I have endeavored to describe, they will soon conquer the nations to Christ. There is nothing so affecting—so persuasive to the soul of man—as to see a fellow creature powerfully agitated and impelled by some great passion and interest. We are *made* so as to catch the contagion from one another. A single horseman galloping through a multitude, pale with fear as if an enemy were at hand, will spread a panic through a multitude. A few brave men rushing into battle and calling upon their comrades to follow, will turn a regiment of cowards into heroes. Paul in chains pleading with Felix and Agrippa, made the one tyrant tremble on his throne, and the other confess himself almost persuaded to be a Christian.

2. Lastly, we ought all to be happy in reflecting, that whatever be the errors of some of the evangelical denomina-

tions among us, this grand, cardinal, saving doctrine of "God in Christ," which has been ordained for the accomplishment of his purpose to bring back man from enmity to love, is held and preached faithfully by them all. Yea, in this we do rejoice and will rejoice. While we deplore the divisions of Christ's kingdom—while we see so many things that we disapprove, let us rejoice that this life-giving article of our common faith is held fast, set forth and pressed upon the attention of a careless world by thousands of ambassadors, not of our name, who have felt its divine power on their own heart, in reconciling them to God, and then have gone forth to try its mighty efficacy upon the hearts of others. Oh how much more worthy is it of the sacramental host of God's elect, instead of wrangling with one another and exasperating each other's feelings by spiteful words, to rejoice that there are so many things in which we can agree, and that God will work out the salvation of men by other hands as well as ours, and that however he may permit to err in some things, he keeps them sound in *this*, and wields it by their tongues for the reconciliation of an alienated world.

A CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

In the life of Dr. Alexander, one of the most learned and able teachers of theology this country ever produced, as well as an excellent man and eloquent preacher, the following interesting passage occurs, descriptive of a truly good though unlearned minister :

Mr. Yarbrough took occasion to inform us that there was a Baptist preacher in his employment as a millwright, who would be at the house as soon as his work was finished. Accordingly about the dusk of the evening, an old man in coarse garb, with leathern apron, and laden with tools, entered the house, and took his seat on the stairs. Neither Mr. Grigsby nor I had ever been acquainted with uneducated preachers, and we were struck with astonishment that this

carpenter should pretend to preach. When we retired, Mr. Shelburne, such was his name, was put into the same room with us. I felt an avidity to question him respecting his call to the ministry, taking it for granted that the old man was ignorant. I therefore began by asking him what he considered a call to the ministry. Mr. Shelburne perceived the drift of my question, and instead of giving a general answer, proceeded to a narrative of his experience, and to state the circumstances which led him to suppose that God had called him to be a preacher. The substance of his story was as follows :

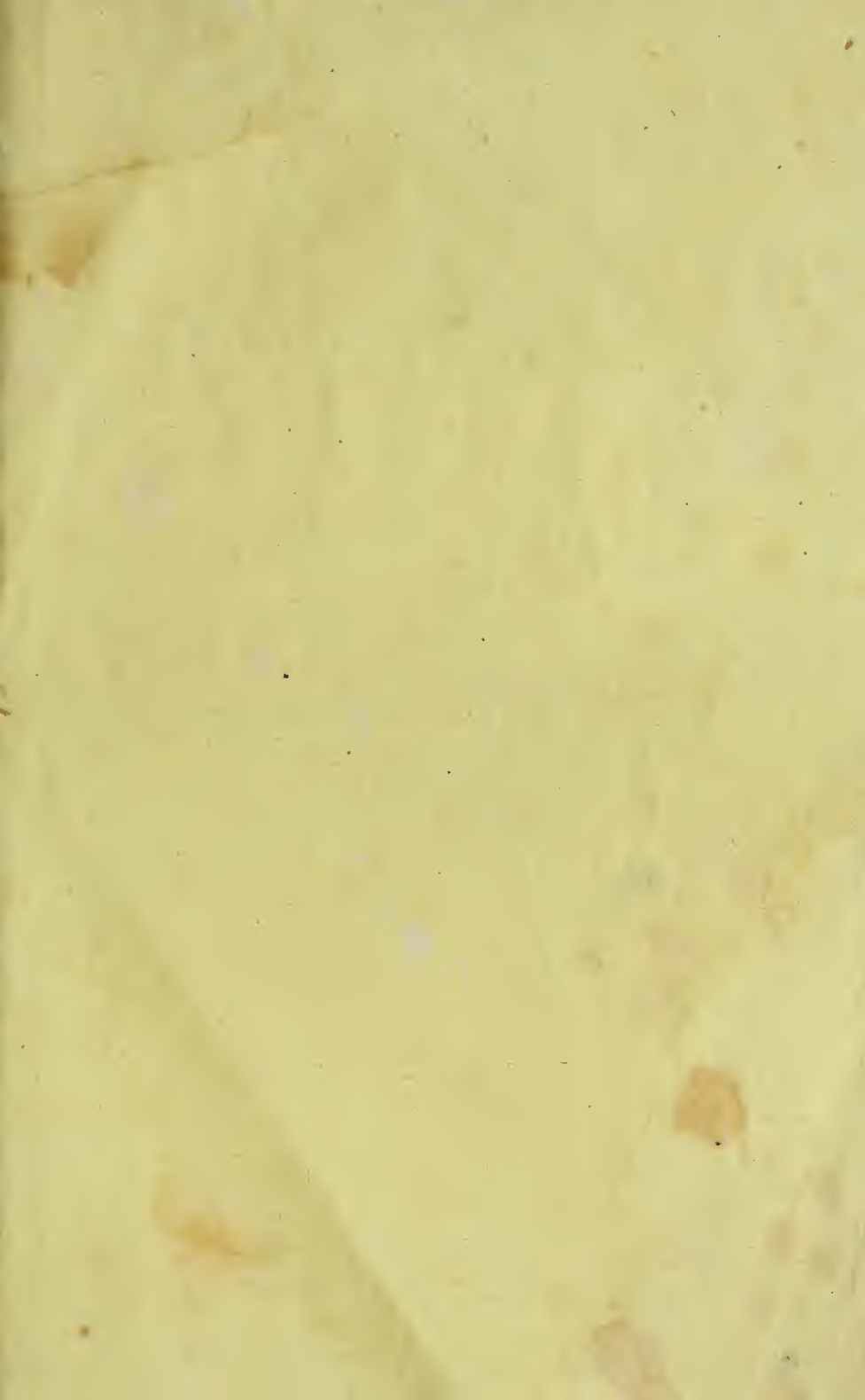
‘ I was born in one of the lower counties of Virginia, and when young was put to learn the carpenter’s trade. Until I was a man grown, and had a family, I never heard any preaching but from ministers of the Established Church, and did not even know that there were any others. About this time came into the neighborhood a Presbyterian minister by the name of Martin, whom I went to hear ; and before he was done, I was convinced that I was in a lost and undone condition. He made no stay, and I heard no more of him. But a wound had been left in my conscience which I knew not how to get healed, and no one about me could give any valuable advice as to a cure. I went from day to day under a heavy burden, bewailing my miserable state, till at length my distress became so great that I could neither eat nor sleep with any peace or comfort. My neighbors said I was falling into melancholy or going mad, but not one of them had any knowledge, from experience, of the nature of my distress. Thus I continued mourning over my miserable case for weeks and months. I was led, however, to read constantly in the Bible ; this rather increased than lessened my distress ; until one Sunday evening I saw as clearly as I ever saw anything how I could be saved through the death of Christ. I was filled with comfort ; and yet sorrow for my sins flowed more copiously than ever. I praised God aloud, and immediately told my wife that I had found salvation ; and when any of my neighbors came to see me, I told them of the goodness of God, and what he had done for my soul, and how he had pardoned all my sins. As I spoke freely of the wonderful change I had experienced, it was soon noised abroad, and many came to see me, and to hear an account of the matter from my own mouth.

‘ On Sabbath evenings my house would be crowded, and when I had finished my narrative I was accustomed to give them a word of exhortation. And as I could better be heard while standing, I stood and addressed my neighbors, without any thought of preaching. After proceeding some time in this way, I found that several others began to be awakened by what they heard from me, and appeared to be brought through the new birth much as I had been. This greatly encouraged me to proceed in my work, and God was pleased to bless my humble labors to the conversion of many. All this time I did no more than relate my own experience, and then exhort my neighbors to seek unto the Lord for mercy. Thus was I led on from step to step, until at length I actually became a preacher, without intending it. Exercised persons would frequently come to me for counsel, as I had been the first among them to experience the grace of God ; and that I might be able to answer their questions, I was induced to study the Bible continually : and often while at work particular passages would be opened to my mind ; which encouraged me to hope that the Lord had called me to instruct those who were more ignorant than myself ; and when the people would collect at my house, I explained to them those passages which had been opened to my mind. All this time I had no instruction in spiritual matters from any man, except the sermons which I heard from Mr. Martin. But after a few years there came a Baptist preacher into our neighborhood, and I found that his doctrine agreed substantially with my experience, and with what I had learned out of the Bible. I traveled about with him, and was encouraged by him to go on in the exercise of my gift of public speaking, but was told by him that there was one duty which I was required to perform, which was that I should be baptized according to the command of Christ. As we rode along we came to a certain water, and I said, see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized ? Upon which we both went down into the water, and he baptized me by immersion in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. From that time I have continued unto this day, testifying to small and great, to white and black, repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ; and not without pleasure seeing many sinners forsaking their sins and turning unto God.

‘ Now,’ said he, ‘ you have heard the reasons which induced

me to believe that God has called me to preach the gospel to the poor and ignorant. I never considered myself qualified to instruct men of education and learning. I have always felt badly when such have come to hear me. But as for people of my own class, I believed that I could teach them many things which they need to know ; and in regard to such as had become pious, I was able by study of the Bible and meditation, to go before them, so that to them also I could be in some measure a guide. I lament my want of learning, and am deeply convinced that it is useful to the ministry of the gospel ; but it seems to me that there are different gifts now as of old, and one man may be suited to one part of the Lord's work, and another to another part. And I do not know but that poor and ignorant people can understand my coarse and familiar language better than the discourses of the most learned and eloquent men. I know their method of thinking and reasoning, and how to make things plain by illustrations and comparisons adapted to their capacities and their habits.'

When the old millwright had finished his narrative, I felt much more inclined to doubt my own call to the ministry, than that of James Shelburne. Much of the night was spent in this conversation, while my companion was enjoying his usual repose. We talked freely about the doctrines of religion, and were mutually gratified at finding how exactly our views tallied. From this night James Shelburne became an object of my high regard, and he gave abundant testimony of his esteem for me. * * * * As he followed his trade from day to day, I once asked him how he found time to study his sermons ; to which he replied, that he could study better at his work, with his hammer in his hand, than if shut up and surrounded with books. When he had passed the seventieth year of his age he gave up work, and devoted himself entirely to preaching. Being a man of firm health, he traveled to a considerable distance and preached nearly every day. On one of these tours, after I was settled in Charlotte county, I saw him for the last time. The old man appeared to be full of zeal and love, and brought the spirit of the gospel into every family which he visited. He was evidently ripening for heaven, and accordingly, not long after, he finished his course with joy.



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